The Spirit(s) of the Leningrad Underground: Viktor Krivulin's Communion with Russian Modernism

Author(s): Clint B. Walker

Source: *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Winter, 1999, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Winter, 1999), pp. 674-698

Published by: American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages

Stable URL: http://www.jstor.com/stable/309419

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at https://about.jstor.org/terms

is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Slavic and East European Journal*

THE SPIRIT(S) OF THE LENINGRAD UNDERGROUND: VIKTOR KRIVULIN'S COMMUNION WITH RUSSIAN MODERNISM

Clint B. Walker, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Сложите книги кострами,
Пляшите в их радостном свете . . .
В. Брюсов, "Грядущие гунны"

Я сказал: виноград, как старинная битва, живет . . .
О. Мандельштам, "Золотистого меда струя . . ."

До сих пор на губах моих—красная пена заката,
всюду—отблески зарева, языки сожигаемых книг.
В. Кривулин, "Пью вино архаизмов . . ."

The term "Leningrad underground" is commonly used to refer to an entire generation of Leningrad poets, prose writers, musicians, and artists who chose not to participate in "official" Soviet culture, publishing their work themselves (*samizdat*), abroad (*tamizdat*), or circulating it by means of audio tapes (*magnitizdat*).[1] Relatively few attempts have been made either to identify the main literary and cultural wellsprings feeding the Leningrad underground or to establish the aesthetic principles unifying their generation.[2]

With the passing of the Soviet age, the time has come to begin evaluating the heritage left by an entire generation of talented Leningrad poets who, like Viktor Krivulin, somehow never received the attention or recognition of their exiled literary brother, Joseph Brodsky. Practically unknown abroad and insufficiently studied in their own country, the poets of the Leningrad underground inherited one of the richest literary traditions in world literature. The poetry of Annenskii, Blok, Mandelstam, and Akhmatova represents a vast poetic legacy, but one could extend the list to include many other poets of the modernist era. It is my hope that this article, which will focus on Viktor Krivulin, will stimulate interest in one of the less studied areas of Russian literature, the legacy of the Leningrad underground.

SEEJ, Vol. 43, No. 4 (1999): p. 674–p. 698

A talented poet in his own right, more recently Krivulin has become a spokesman, expositor, and historian of *samizdat* and the literary underground.[3] This role is complicated, however, by Krivulin's own participation in the culture he is now chronicling and interpreting. In light of such circumstances, Krivulin's poetry of the late 1960s and early 1970s—though arguably not his most sophisticated work—nevertheless becomes an extremely important context for helping to define the spiritual and cultural parameters of underground and, to a lesser degree, *samizdat*, culture.

Viktor Borisovich Krivulin was born in Kadievka, near Krasnodon, in 1944.[4] He attended school No. 79 (formerly gymnasium No. 1, where Blok studied) and graduated from Leningrad University in 1967 with a degree thesis on Innokentii Annenskii. That same year Krivulin founded his own literary group, the "Concrete School." He served as the editor of the journal *37* (1975–81) and co-editor, with Sergei Dediulin, of *Northern Post* (*Severnaia pochta*, 1979–80), the latter being the first *samizdat* journal devoted exclusively to poetic theory.[5] He was also an organizing member of *Lepta*,[6] a group of primarily unpublished poets who, beginning in February 1975, sent a series of requests to the Union of Soviet Writers for permission to publish a collective volume of verse.[7]

Lepta was far from a homogeneous group, as records of the proceedings clearly demonstrate. One of the contributors, Aleksandr Morev, criticized the volume's tendency toward conservative, antiquated forms and "God-seeking" (*Bogoiskatel'stvo*), while Eduard Schneiderman saw a dangerous "withdrawal into religion and history" (Kuzminsky 5B: 303–304). Viktor Krivulin disagreed:

> The word "contemporaneity" (*sovremennost'*) is sometimes understood exclusively as an injection of reality on a low plane. *Sovremennost'* is an orientation of literary process. One of the most significant features of its worldview is a heightened interest in spirituality, from Buddhism to traditional forms. At the moment such a movement is productive. More productive for me is pseudo-classical verse—more so than the free verse of the 1960s. The underground condition (*podval'nost'*) is a stamp of its time. But we want light. (Kuzminsky 5B: 308)

Krivulin's objection underlines two major aspects of his poetic stance in the mid-1970s: his emphasis on restoring ties with poetic tradition and his need for a spiritual foundation for his poetry.[8] The introduction to the proposed 1975 collection, which one suspects was penned by Krivulin, begins by invoking Iurii Tynianov's notion of literary dynamism.[9] It goes on to assert the importance of "the collective memory of poetry—tradition," calling for "attention to the 'wiped-out' past," particularly the poetry of Pushkin, Tiutchev, Annenskii, and Mandelstam (Kuzminsky 5B: 312–315).

Lepta's proposed volume would not see light in the Soviet Union for another ten years, when it appeared in considerably altered form as the above-mentioned *Krug*. Since then Krivulin has published a two-volume collection (1988), had his poetry appear in several English-language an-

thologies,[10] participated in exhibitions of Russian avant-garde art in Finland (Feb. 1994) and Berlin (Feb. 1995), and has written critical pieces on Annenskii, Joseph Brodsky, Sergei Dovlatov, and Sergei Stratanovskii.[11] Over the past several years Krivulin has officially been recognized as one of Petersburg's most important poets, as well as an eloquent spokesman of *samizdat* and the second culture. Yet it is the Krivulin of the 1970s that recently prompted poet Olga Sedakova's unreserved praise:

> [Krivulin] was not only a poet, but the center of a large circle, a *Kulturträger* and mystagogue comparable to Viacheslav Ivanov. Of course, [those were] different times, different "towers" (*bashni*)[12] . . . (259)

Boris Ivanov expresses similar sentiments in "When Petersburg Was Leningrad":

> Towards the middle of the 1970s Viktor Krivulin became perhaps the most popular of the independent poets. His art can be grouped with the "culturological school"—it was infused with a sense of historical stagnation and solitude. He often spoke of defenselessness, of the spiritual mission of poetry, within the context of classical and Biblical conceptions. (193)

Ivanov's remarks are quite illuminating, both with regard to Krivulin's poetry and the context in which it was written. Poets of the underground felt suffocated by the cultural stagnation of the Brezhnev era. Krivulin's poetry actively strives to overcome this spiritual and cultural void.

The Cornerstone of the Underground Church

> The spirit of underground culture, as an early apostle-like light
> V. B. Krivulin

Much of Viktor Krivulin's poetry of the 1970s attempts to restore badly severed ties with Mandelstam's Logos-centered poetic tradition.[13] In addition to addressing their literary heritage, poets of the underground, perhaps following Brodsky's lead in "Great Elegy to John Donne" (*Bol'shaia elegiia Dzhonu Donnu*), also began to address spiritual issues. Krivulin's "I drink the wine of archaisms" (*P'iu vino arkhaizmov*) is a religious meditation on the communion of the Leningrad underground with Russian modernism, and, perhaps to a lesser degree, with religious philosophers such as Vladimir Solov'ev and Pavel Florenskii.[14]

First, a brief justification of why I have singled out "I drink the wine . . ." for close analysis. In his introduction to Krivulin's first published collection, the 1981 Paris *Stikhi*, Anatolii Betaki refers to a line from this poem, the one I have chosen as an epigraph for this section, as "almost the motto of the new 'unpublished' generation" (*Stikhi*, 7). Poet Olga Sedakova has also noted the poem's significance within the second culture.[15] Finally, "I drink the wine" opens Krivulin's 1981 volume, a clear indication of the poem's importance to the author—particularly since it was originally composed some eight years earlier. Before turning to my

analysis, I present the text in full. A translation into English is given in the appendix.

Пью вино архаизмов. О солнце, горевшем когда-то,
говорит, заплетаясь, и бредит язык.
До сих пор на губах моих—красная пена заката,
всюду—отблески зарева, языки сожигаемых книг.
Гибнет каждое слово, но весело гибнет, крылато,
отлетая в объятия Логоса-брата,
от какого огонь изгоняемой жизни возник.

Гибнет каждое слово!
В рощах библиотек
опьяненье былого
тяжелит мои веки.
Кто сказал: катакомбы?
В пивные бредем и аптеки!
И подпольные судьбы
черны, как подземные реки,
маслянисты, как нефть. Окунуть бы
в эту жидкость тебя, человек,
опочивший в гуманнейшем веке!

Как бы ты осветился, покрывшись пернатым огнем!
Пью вино архаизмов. Горю от стыда над страницей:
ино-странница мысль развлекается в мире ином,
иногда оживляя собой отрешенные лица.
До бесчувствия—стыдно сказать—умудряюсь напиться
мертвой буквой ума—до потери в сознаньи моем
семигранных сверкающих призм очевидца!

В близоруком тумане
в предутренней дымке утрат—
винный камень строений
и заспанных глаз виноград.
Труд похмелья. Похмелье труда.
Угол зрения зыбок и переменчив.
Искажающей линзою речи
расплющены сны-города.
Что касается готики—нечем,
нечем видеть пока что ее,
раз утрачена где-то вражда
между светом и тьмою.
Наркотическое забытье
называется, кажется, мною!

Дух культуры подпольной, как раннеапостольский свет,
брезжит в окнах, из черных клубится подвалов.
Пью вино архаизмов. Торчу на пирах запоздалых,
но еще впереди—я надеюсь, я верую—нет!
Я хотел бы уверовать в пепел хотя бы, в провалы,
что останутся после—единственный след
от погасшего слова, какое во мне полыхало!

Гибнет голос—живет отголосок.
Щипцы вырывают язык,
он дымится на мокром помосте средь досок,
к сапогам, распластавшись, прилип.
Он шевелится, мертвый, он пьян
ощущением собственной крови . . .
Пью вино архаизмов, пьянящее внове,
отдающее оцетом оцепенелой любови,
воскрешением ран. (*Stikhi: osnovnye zapisi*, 108–109)

Much of Krivulin's verse of the 1970s is founded on a conception of poetry as dialogue. In an interview with Vladislav Kulakov, "Poetry Is a Conversation of Language with Itself," Krivulin notes that in the 1970s he often "would use other peoples' texts as springboards, truly feeling poetry to be an endless conversation, a dialogue, a chorus, a communal sounding" (60).[16] In "I drink the wine" Krivulin conducts a dialogue with two of the most important poets of the modernist period, Valerii Briusov and Osip Mandelstam. Krivulin evokes Briusov in order to polemicize with his poetic stance, one that helped create the gulf separating Krivulin's generation from the legacy of Russian modernism. By invoking Mandelstamian subtexts, Krivulin extends the dimensions of his poetic conversation to "triangular" proportions. Rather than answer Briusov solely from his own vantage point, Krivulin subtly directs his response through the literary and cultural prism of Mandelstam's poetry, thereby bringing Mandelstam's dialogue with the symbolists into the cultural context of the Leningrad underground.

For the speaker of "I drink the wine," reading the Russian modernists becomes a bittersweet ritual of communion (*prichastie*) with Logos, the metaphysical source of a poet's vitality. The speaker laments the mortality of the word (*Gibnet kazhdoe slovo*), feeling an intoxicating sorrow similar to that of Mandelstam's speaker in "A stream of golden mead flowed from a bottle" (*Zolotistogo meda struia iz butylki tekla*) and "Sisters—heaviness and tenderness . . ." (*Sestry tiazhest' i nezhnost' . . .*). Paradoxically, however, for Krivulin's speaker, the word dies "joyously" (*veselo gibnet*), for it is destined to return to the divine world of "Logos-brother." Just as Christ was both embodied flesh and deity, so too is the word—though its flesh dies, its spirit, or "afterglow" (*otblesk*, *otgolosok*), lives eternally. Thus, as with the communion of Christ's blood, the communion of the poetic word is bitter and sweet simultaneously—tragic because the flesh of the word must die, but joyous in the renewal that its "afterglow" provides in the dark depths of the underground.

In the opening lines of "I drink the wine" Krivulin's speaker "raves" (*bredit*) about the "sun which once was burning" (*solntse*, *gorevshem kogda-to*), and his lips bear the "red foam of sunset"[17] (*krasnaia pena*

zakata). He sees "fiery sunset reflections, tongues of books being burned" (*otbleski zareva, iazyki sozhigaemykh knig*), an image suggesting the destruction of culture. Sun imagery can be rather difficult for the interpreter to pin down due to its many connotations. Even if we limit ourselves solely to a Russian poetic context, the associations often appear contradictory. The symbolists, for example, heralded the coming revolution with images of the sun.[18] In contrast, Mandelstam tends to employ sun imagery to represent Russia's cultural legacy.[19] Krivulin's "sun which once was burning" thus requires more contextualization within the fabric of the poem.

After mourning the loss of the word in the first stanza, the speaker asks, "Who said: [down to the] catacombs?/We shamble to bars and to drugstores!" Krivulin is posing a sort of cultural riddle here, one he expects his readers to solve. If we are able to identify the author and the corresponding context of "catacombs" (*katakomby*),[20] we may be closer to understanding the implications of the sun imagery from the opening stanza.

In Valerii Briusov's "The Coming Huns" (*Griadushchie gunny*), which was written shortly after the 1905 revolution, a nihilistic poet-speaker zealously welcomes the chaotic forces looming over Russia's historical horizons. The speaker invites the bearers of revolutionary destruction to "pile the books on the bonfires" and "create abomination in the temple" while poets, "keepers of mystery and faith," will "carry burning lights/to the catacombs, deserts, caves":

Сложите книги кострами,
Пляшите в их радостном свете,
Творите мерзость во храме,—
Вы во всем неповинны, как дети!

А мы, мудрецы и поэты,
Хранители тайны и веры,
Унесем зажженные светы
В катакомбы, в пустыни, в пещеры. (Briusov, 278)

Pile the books on the bonfires,
Dance in their joyous light,
Create abomination in the temple,—
You are guiltless in everything, like children!

But we, wise ones and poets,
Keepers of mystery and faith,
Will carry burning lights
To the catacombs, deserts, caves.

Briusov's speaker willingly invites destruction in the name of "the coming days" (*griadushchee*), a word about which Brodsky wrote in *A Part of Speech*, ". . . and at the word '*griadushchee*' from the Russian language/ mice run out and as one horde/gnaw from a tasty morsel/of memory, that

your cheese is full of holes" (*Sochineniia*, II, 415). Krivulin's image of burning books in the first stanza, then, is clearly meant to recall Briusov's call to "pile the books on the bonfires." Out of fairness, it should be stressed that Briusov was far from the only poet to welcome revolutionary violence: fellow symbolist Aleksandr Blok echoes Briusov's call in poems like "To my Friends" (*Druz'iam*, 1908), where his generation "watches drunken from the streets/As our homes are collapsing." Lamenting such loss even as he welcomes the bearers of destruction, Blok retorts, "Be silent, damned books!/I never wrote you!" (*Serebrianyi vek*, 363).

In a letter to A. A. Shesterkina from 1 November 1905 Briusov wrote, "I am interested in the revolution only as an observer [*kak zritel'*] . . . But I live my life, am burning in the eternal fire . . . I'll remain myself, whether it be during terror, or in a time when they smash museums and burn books . . ." (Briusov, 799). The final stanza of "The Coming Huns" expresses similar sentiments:

> Бесследно все сгибнет, быть может,
> Что ведомо было одним нам,
> Но вас, кто меня уничтожит,
> Встречаю приветственным гимном. (278)
>
> Perhaps everything will perish without a trace,
> What was known to us alone,
> But you who will destroy me
> I greet with a welcoming hymn.

In *Poety simvolizma* Vladimir Piast succintly conveys Briusov's apocalyptic obsession with the future:

> And in his civic spirit Briusov is drawn towards the coming days [*griadushchee*]. How he loves to retreat from the present into the depths of the coming ages! (Gofman 74)

Herein, I believe, is the center of Krivulin's poetic dialogue with Briusov and the symbolists. Briusov embraces destructive forces in the name of the future, the coming society that will rise from the ashes and debris of the old. In "To the Poet" Briusov conveys his willingness to "ascend the bonfire," asserting that, "Perhaps, all in life is merely the means/for brilliantly-singing verse" (Briusov, 287). Furthermore, he calls on the poet to be a "cold witness" (*kholodnyi svidetel'*) to the destruction of past culture. Briusov's conception of the nihilistic, revolutionary poet differs significantly from Krivulin's (or Mandelstam's) image of the poet as an "eyewitness" (*ochevidets*),[21] a concept that signifies the poet's duty to preserve and defend cultural treasures at all costs.

Krivulin knows full well that Briusov failed in his aspiration to become the head of a new "Soviet" school of poetry. Instead, he became a literary bureaucrat. Mandelstam's poetic stance and fate as a literary exile contrast

sharply with those of Briusov, and this contrast provides much of the pathos that feeds "I drink the wine." Krivulin struggles through severed poetic time-space to inherit the culture-oriented legacy of Mandelstam, and he implicitly incriminates poets like Briusov for helping to create such an enormous cultural rift between the underground generation and the heritage of Russian modernists.

Krivulin's generation was left to reap the bitter fruits of the nihilism heralded by Briusov. Krivulin's question—"Who said: [down to the] catacombs?"—is meant as a rhetorical reproach, a reminder of the many who, like Briusov, welcomed the destructive forces of the revolution. In contrast to Briusov's future-directed gaze, Krivulin's speaker is left to peer into the severed legacy of the past, the "archaic" cultural inheritance that Briusov so readily assigned to the apocalyptic fires.[22] Krivulin's generation has no catacombs in which to preserve the legacy of the past: the "hostility between the dark and the light" has been lost. Poets of the underground gather in bars and drugstores,[23] lost in the "narcotic oblivion" of the present. Krivulin's self-irony—with such lines as "The labor of hangover" and "I contrive to get drunk/on the dead letter of intellect"—serves to lower the status of the poet in the Brezhnev era. His comically deflated image of the poet differs considerably from Briusov's conception of the revolutionary poet, which overflows with inflated zealotry. Poets of Krivulin's generation turned out much differently than Briusov anticipated in "The Coming Huns": they are a generation of half-poets, "children of a half culture" (*deti polukul'tury*) who live "with a half childlike smile"[24] (*s ulibkoi zhivem poludetskoi—Stikhi: osnovnye zapisi*, 44).

The fourth stanza of "I drink the wine" expands the parameters of Krivulin's polemic with Briusov by stressing the motif of work: "The labor of hangover. Hangover of labor" (*Trud pokhmel'ia. Pokhmel'e truda*). "Labor" functions on several levels. First, there is the intellectual effort of the poet striving for cultural communion. On a more ironic level, however, Krivulin mocks Soviet materialism: instead of "productive" manual labor, Krivulin's poem glorifies the culture of the underground, where wine and poetry have become true sources of what Heidegger calls "building as cultivating."[25] Krivulin's irony is undoubtedly meant to recall Briusov's later poetry, particularly "Work" (*Rabota*, 1917) and the ode "Labor" (*Trud*, 1919), where the former symbolist glorifies manual labor and praises the revolution as a republic of work. Significantly, Mandelstam was the first to contrast the Soviet concept of *trud* with poetic labor in "Fourth Prose."[26]

Krivulin thus does not polemicize with Briusov on his own: he also invokes the poetic "wine-spirits" of Briusov's contemporary, Osip Mandelstam. Krivulin's triangular dialogue allows him to speak to Briusov through the lens of Mandelstam. Fully aware of Mandelstam's own dia-

logue with the symbolists in poems like "The Twilight of Freedom" (*Sumerki svobody*) and "A Stream of Golden Mead," Krivulin extends these polemics to the cultural space of the underground. Mandelstam labored to gather the Russian poetic tradition "for a future tribe," and eventually he himself was consumed by the fires of the revolution. In the words of Brodsky, Mandelstam was "a modern Orpheus: sent to hell, he never returned . . ." (*Less than One*, 144). Krivulin's struggle, then, is to commune with the severed legacy of Mandelstamian modernism.

In his earliest poems from the collection *Stone* (*Kamen'*), particularly "Notre Dame" and "Hagia Sophia," Mandelstam demonstrates his commitment to the erection of poetic edifices on the foundations of the cultural past. The Brezhnev era ushered in a period of almost complete disregard for the preservation of cultural memory. Brodsky hauntingly captured such irreverence towards tradition in "A Halt in the Desert" (*Ostanovka v pustyne*), where the ironic opening, "So few Greeks remain in Leningrad," laments the spiritual and cultural vacuum of an entire generation. Magnificent cultural monuments like the Greek church on Ligovskii prospect, to which Brodsky refers in the poem, were being destroyed to make room for monstrous projects like the 1967 Concert Hall "October."

Krivulin's poetry is saturated with the smoky atmosphere of Gothic temples and Orthodox churches of the past, but the physical edifices themselves are strikingly absent from his poetic landscape. Instead, members of the underground have become new apostles of Logos, inspired by the "Holy Spirit" of Russia's cultural past in the bars and drug stores (*pivnye i apteki*) of Leningrad. Drinking[27] becomes a form of religious ritual, a means of communing with other souls lost in the depths of "narcotic oblivion."

The Revolution and its aftermath generated a new relation to the past, to culture, and ultimately, to Logos. As Mandelstam argues, culture was "transformed into a church" (*Kultura stala tserkov'iu*). In essence, the Word took on the symbolic role of Savior, sharing the "fate of bread and the flesh" ("The Word and Culture," 225–226).

Mandelstam's "In Petersburg we'll meet again" speaks of returning to his beloved city "as if we had buried the sun there," a reference to Russia's nineteenth-century cultural legacy, especially that of Pushkin.[28] The speaker imagines pronouncing the "blessed, nonsensical word" for the first time, praying in the Soviet night that his poems will be gathered as "light ash" (*legkhii pepel*), the last traces of a dying culture. In another poem from 1919 the speaker drinks in the "cold mountain air of Christianity/The steep 'I believe' (*Krutoe "Veruiu"*) and the pause of the psalmist" (120). Krivulin's lyrical "I" desires to believe in the dusty traces (*Ia khotel by uverovat' v pepel khotia by*), but his use of the subjunctive indicates skepticism. Whereas Mandelstam speaks of the "light ash" he hopes will be gathered, Krivulin's generation must now search for this ash. For Krivulin, all of the word's flesh

is sacrificed; only immaterial traces (*otgoloski, otbleski*) live on. Nothing ties the word to its earthly abode, and in time it rises upward towards *Logos-brat.* Krivulin powerfully conveys the bittersweet sense of such loss in "The Smoke of Stone" (*Dym kamnia*, 1972):

> События умерли. Одни преданья живы.
> И камня острый дым в готическом костре
> все к небу тянется, все тянется, счастливый . . . (56)
>
> The events have died. Only legends are alive.
> And the caustic smoke of stone in a Gothic bonfire
> stretches ever higher towards the sky, blithe . . .

Faced with the inevitability of cultural loss, the poet must somehow transform, even transfigure, the feverous "perspiration of shame" (*isparina styda*) that remains. "The Smoke of Stone" recalls Mandelstam's *Stone* collection as well as the Tiutchev lyric "Smoke" (*Dym*), where the title image is used to evoke the loss of the word. In Krivulin's poem, however, the word has already been freed of its bond to the flesh of language (*kamen' pliashushchii lishilsia iazyka*), and its dance is both joyous and melancholic. In "On the Nature of the Word" Mandelstam criticizes the "theory of progress" in literature, arguing that "each change [of form], each acquisition is accompanied by loss" (243).

The Underground and the Culture of the Past

Mandelstamian images of culture buried in the form of coins or horseshoes[29] become realized metaphors in the underground, where the oily rivers of "underground fates" (*podpol'nye sud'by*) evoke association with Lethe, Hades' river of oblivion, as well as with the poet as a modern-day Orpheus. Daily life has become inseparable from the depths of hell—the hostility has been lost "between the light and the dark." Krivulin's speaker would like to immerse human beings in the oily liquids of the underground and watch them light up, covered in "feathery fire":

> Окунуть бы
> в эту жидкость тебя, человек,
> опочивший в гуманнейшем веке!
> Как бы ты осветился, покрывшись пернатым огнем!

This passage evokes the gulf separating the speaker from the "human/ who passed away in a most humane age,"[30] most likely a reference to the demise of humanism described by Blok in "The Collapse of Humanism" (*Krushenie gumanizma*). The action of immersion suggests a form of baptism, one which would result in a miracle reminiscent of the Biblical transfiguration, when Jesus revealed His true self before the apostles, causing

them to shine like the sun—thus the phrase "How you'd light up . . ." (*Kak by ty osvetilsia*) in the first line of stanza three.[31] Krivulin inverts the Biblical imagery: the disciples were taken up a mountain, while Krivulin would like to immerse man in the depths of the underground. His image thus conveys the potency of modernism (as a producer of light) as well as the oily blackness of his own culture. Whereas in Mandelstam's "Sisters—heaviness and tenderness" man is still in the process of dying (*chelovek umiraet*), and thus the speaker drinks in the turbid air of the present (*ia p'iu pomutivshiisia vozdukh*), for Krivulin's speaker, the humanism of the past age is already dead; the turbid air has been replaced by underground rivers of cultural oblivion.

In another version of "I drink the wine,"[32] Krivulin had "rain" (*dozhd'*) instead of fire. In opting for fire, Krivulin links this image with both the "sun which once burned" (i.e., Russia's poetic heritage) and the "languages of books being burned." Krivulin's paronomasia—in the words for "fire" (*ogon'*) and "exiled life" (*izgoniaemoi zhizni*)—also connects the fiery gift of the word with the life of the exiled poet.

"Feathery fire"[33] recalls the phoenix, the fabulous bird of antiquity—as its end approached, the phoenix is said to have set itself on fire. From the ashes sprang a new phoenix, which flew from its charred nest to Heliopolis, the City of the Sun, where it deposited the ashes on the altar in the high temple of the Sun-god. The phoenix's associations with immortality are obvious, but the legend also suggests an allegory similar to Christ's resurrection. Significantly, Pavel Florenskii refers to the phoenix myth[34] in *Pillar and the Foundation of Truth* while discussing the "feat" (*podvig*) of transfiguring the flesh:

> Just as a phoenix, weaving itself a mortal bonfire, returns to life regenerated in the fire, so the flesh is resurrected in the renunciation of itself, because this fiery baptism is merely a side of spiritual renewal . . . (308)

The Underground Culture of Drinking

In "Sisters—heaviness and tenderness" Mandelstam imbibes the dark air of the passing poetic age, observing painfully, "Man is dying. The warmed sand now cools,/And they're carrying yesterday's sun out on black stretchers." Bumblebees and wasps[35] suck nectar from a heavy rose, an image linking them to the lyrical speaker, who drinks in the murky air of the poetic present. Krivulin's poem is saturated with alcoholic associations, and he draws on Mandelstamian tradition[36] to develop his own poetics of the grape. Krivulin plays with the roots of *vinograd*[37] to evoke communion with poetic tradition, as well as with the "wine stone of edifices" (*vinnyi kamen' stroenii*) erected by the acmeists. Whereas Mandelstam's speaker drinks in the air of the present, Krivulin's lyrical "I" sops up the dregs of "belated feasts" (*piry zapozdalye*),[38] the "drunkenness of bygone times"

(*op'ianen'e bylogo*) that is slowly fading "in the wood groves of libraries" (*V roshchakh bibliotek*). The death of the word, then, is what unites Krivulin's generation with the "classical modernism" of Mandelstam.

In the poem "1 January 1924" Mandelstam speaks of the "pain of searching for a lost word" (*Kakaia bol'—iskat' poteriannoe slovo*), which he likens to "lifting sick eyelids" (*Bol'nye veki podnimat'*), an image repeated in "No, I was never anybody's contemporary."[39] Both poems mourn the death of an age, which in the second "stretches out its clay body" like a sick patient. Here the "sick eyelids" obviously work off the paronomastic potential of the words *vek-veki*.[40]

Krivulin creates a strikingly similar atmosphere of "narcotic oblivion" (*narkoticheskoe zabyt'e*) in "I drink the wine," where he employs the same rhyme pair, *veki/reki*, as Mandelstam does in "1 January 1924." Like his mentor, Krivulin also works off the paronomasia of *vek-veki*, linking the cultural legacy of a former age (*v gumanneishem veke*) with the speaker's sleepy eyes: the "intoxication of the past/weighs down on [the speaker's] eyelids" (*op'ianen'e bylogo/ tiazhelit moi veki*). On a literal level, the speaker's eyelids are obviously made heavy from the intoxicating effects of alcohol, but they are also weighted down by the culture of the past.

Olga Sedakova has noted that "vision and the visual is one of the central themes of Krivulin's poetry" (259). The third and fourth stanzas of "I drink the wine" are filled with vocabulary emphasizing the visual: the "eyewitness" (*ochevidets*) at the end of stanza three; the "nearsighted haze" (*blizorukii tuman*); "grapes of half-asleep eyes"[41] (*zaspannykh glaz vinograd*); the "unsteady and changeable visual angle" (*Ugol zreniia zybok i peremenchiv*); and finally, the synesthetic combination of the "distorting lens of speech" (*iskazhaiushchei linzoiu rechi*). Many Mandelstam scholars have commented on the importance of the visual in his poetry[42]—he considered the eyes one of the poet's most powerful weapons. The poet is "armed with the vision of narrow wasps" (*Vooruzhennyi zren'em uzkikh os*, 251). It is significant, then, that the speaker—a weak poet of Krivulin's era—is unable to see clearly; he becomes intoxicated almost immediately, and as a result, his vision blurs. The contemporary poet cannot handle the potent poetic fumes of Mandelstamian modernism. Consequently, he quickly loses sight of the "seven-sided glittering prisms[43] of an eyewitness."

The predominance of visual imagery in stanzas three and four contrasts with an emphasis on the auditory in the sixth stanza (*Gibnet golos—zhivet otgolosok*), when the speaker at last begins to hear traces of the poetic word. The voice (*golos*) plays a central role in "I drink the wine," and indeed, in much of Krivulin's poetry. While one could argue that *golos* is merely a dominant trope in Russian poetry, its significance for poets of the *samizdat* and *magnitizdat* period cannot be overemphasized. Since publication in state-controlled journals was not a viable option, underground

poetry often circulated by word of mouth or on audio tapes. In fact, Viktor Krivulin traces the very origins of *samizdat* to Mandelstam's declamation in "Fourth Prose" that he alone is working from his voice:

> This story begins with a voice, not a manuscript . . . Osip Mandelstam asserted in 1930: "I alone am working from the voice, and all around me the out-and-out scum (*gustopsovaia svoloch'*) is writing." Thus, the main principle of poetic *samizdat* was set forth for the first time in "Fourth Prose," and this very essay is itself the first real *samizdat* text. . . . (*Samizdat veka*, 343)

Structural Foundations of the Underground

In "On the Nature of the Word" Mandelstam compares the gradual alienation of Europe from its cultural past with a long-burning fire "saturated with oil":

> There are certain eternal fires on the earth, saturated with oil; somewhere by chance [one of them] bursts into flame and burns for decades. There is no neutralizing compound, there is absolutely nothing to put them out . . . (250)

Krivulin's oily underground rivers in "I drink the wine" undoubtedly flow out of Mandelstam's essays on Logos. For Mandelstam, Russia has no architectural "Acropolis" to rely on as a defense against the elemental forces of history; instead, she has the Russian language itself, where each word is "a miniature nutshell of the Acropolis, a small Kremlin, a winged fortress of nominalism, equipped with Hellenic spirit" for battling with the elemental forces threatening Russian history (250). Krivulin's imagery in the first stanza, where the word dies "with wings,/Flying into the embraces of Logos-brother," clearly echoes Mandelstam's "winged fortress of nominalism." For Mandelstam, two forces, or fires, burn eternally on the earth, one philological and the other anti-philological. Both fires provide the fuel that feeds the poetry of Viktor Krivulin.

The poetic edifices built by the acmeists have become obscured "in a nearsighted haze" (*V blizorukom tumane*) and the "smoke of loss" (*v predutrennei dymke utrat*); the speaker must labor to decipher what has become the equivalent of a foreign language. In short, the language of Krivulin's world, that of the Brezhnevian Soviet Union, has become estranged from the language on the page, presumably that of Russian modernism. The speaker's shame, however, helps him gain access to the "foreigner world"[44]: the burning word becomes linked with the "burning shame" of the speaker. The speaker's humility before the word further develops the link between the reading of poetry and religious manuscripts. Mandelstam makes a similar connection in "On the Nature of the Word."[45]

Krivulin emphasizes the bond between the word and the speaker's shame structurally; the "feathery fire" (*pernatym ognem*) rhymes first with the "other world" (*v mire inom*) on the page and, subsequently, with the speaker's consciousness (*v soznan'i moem*). Thus the "fire" of the word,

mingling with the "burning shame," eventually allows the speaker to see the "wine dregs of structures" (*vinnyi kamen' stroenii*) through the "smoke of loss."

The phrase *vinnyi kamen' stroenii* functions on several levels. First, the literal definition according to Dal's dictionary is "the stony residue in kegs of grape wine," or "dregs" (205). Thus, Krivulin continues to develop vocabulary associated with wine. Yet the abundance of Mandelstamian subtexts lends special importance to the word *kamen'*, or "stone," which recalls Mandelstam's pre-revolutionary cycle of the same name. Krivulin links the consumption of wine—specifically, "dregs"—with Mandelstam's "wine-stone edifices." Metaphorically speaking, Krivulin's generation imbibes the dregs remaining from Russian modernism.

By employing four- and five-foot anapestic lines in three of its six stanzas, "I drink the wine" evokes association with Mandelstam's classical cadences in "A stream of golden mead" (originally titled "*Vinograd*"—"The Grape") and "Sisters—heaviness and tenderness."[46] The three seven-line stanzas of "I drink the wine" (1,3,5) contain alternating masculine-feminine rhyme in the pattern [AbAbAAb/cDcDDcD/eFFeFeF], where upper case represents feminine rhyme. The first and fifth stanzas contain two four-foot anapests, lines 2 and 6, while in the third stanza this alternation occurs in line 7. Mandelstam uses a similar four- and five-foot alternation. Furthermore, as in Mandelstam's poems, Krivulin's lyrical "I" imbibes culture—instead of the "thick air," however, Krivulin's speaker becomes drunk on cultural dregs.

Krivulin's refrain also acts as a gauge of the speaker's emotional state. In the first stanza, the phrase "I drink the wine of archaisms" opens the poem, immediately stressing the speaker's distance from the "sun which once was burning." In stanza three he has already begun to imbibe Russia's poetic legacy—therefore, the refrain drops down to the second line. By stanza five, "I drink the wine" has descended to the third line. Nevertheless, the speaker is still unable to find the strength "to believe in the ashes." Only in the final stanza, when the refrain has dropped to the seventh line, does the poet truly attain "communion" with tradition. In this final stanza classical lines like those in the longer, anapestic stanzas (1,3,5) combine with truncated, more "modernist" lines—ones containing both anapests and amphibrachs, as in stanzas 2 and 4—to emphasize the speaker's true communion with Russian poetic tradition. In other words, the final truncated stanza (i.e., "modernist") also contains a "classical" refrain (i.e., "I drink the wine of archaisms"). Thus, the poem's artistic structure highlights its semantic structure, both within individual stanzas and at the "outer" level of stanzaic arrangement, where longer, "classical" stanzas alternate with truncated, more modernist ones until poetic "synthesis" (communion) is achieved.[47]

Underground Communion

The final stanza of "I drink the wine" describes a tongue torn out by tongs (*Shchiptsy vyryvaiut iazyk*), thereby evoking Pushkin's well known "The Prophet" ("*Prorok*"), where a seraph touches the poet's eyes that he might see, fills his ears with noise and sound, and tears out his sinful tongue (*vyrval greshnyi moi iazyk*). By linking his poetic persona with Pushkin's prophet, who is "languishing in a desert," Krivulin subtly suggests the cultural drought of the Brezhnevian Soviet Union. Instead of the divine frenzy of Pushkinian inspiration, however, Krivulin's poet spends hours laboring over texts of the past, "contriving to get drunk on the dead letter of reason." Furthermore, the speaker witnesses an apparent execution:

> Гибнет голос—живет отголосок.
> Щипцы вырывают язык,
> он дымится на мокром помосте средь досок,
> к сапогам, распластавшись, прилип.
> Он шевелится, мертвый, он пьян
> ощущением собственной крови . . .

The speaker's tongue continues to move despite its "death"; it is "drunk/ with the sense of its own blood." At first these lines appear to suggest Dionysian ecstasy; the speaker seems at last to have reached some form of inspiration after his long, exhausting efforts. The image of a scaffold (*pomost*) contradicts such a reading, however. The tongue, clearly a metaphor for the poetic voice, "smokes on the wet scaffold 'mid all the planks,/ flattened, it sticks to the boots."[48] Given the tongue's drunkenness "at the sense of its own blood," how are we to interpret this final scene?

In "The Poetics of Osip Mandelstam" Lidiia Ginzburg notes the importance of the word "blood" (*krov'*) in Mandelstam's poetics (277). Blood represents life force, but dry blood is "a failure, a substitution for blood." It is the role of the poet to "free blood from dryness" (278). In Krivulin's poem, the tongue smokes "on a wet scaffold" (*na mokrom pomoste*), thus emphasizing its vital, life-giving energy.

"I drink the wine" graphically depicts the bloody execution of the poetic voice, which continues to writhe *after its own death*. Krivulin's image suggests a miracle similar to those associated with the bodies of saints. Here it becomes important to consider a second cultural subtext associated with Krivulin's tongue imagery, Avvakum's *Life* (*Zhitie*).[49] Near the end of this autobiographical hagiography, Avvakum relates how he and his fellow Old Believers were led to the scaffold (*plakha*) to hear their sentence. The officials took one of Avvakum's comrades, the priest Lazar', and proceeded to "cut out the whole of his tongue from his throat" (*iazyk ves'*

vyrezali iz gorla [*Pamiatniki literatury Drevnei Rusi*, 386]). Lazar' continued to speak without a tongue, thereby demonstrating the miraculous power of his faith. The executioners then seized a hermit named Epifanii and the deacon Feodor (Theodore) and cut out their tongues as well, but both continued to speak as before. Furthermore, over time the wounds inside Feodor's mouth healed, and his tongue grew out again (387). The point of Avvakum's story is clear: his tormentors can physically maim and even kill the Old Believers, but they cannot silence them. The true word will always be resurrected.

In "I drink the wine" the disembodied tongue is trampled[50] on a scaffold, but it continues to move even after its own "death" (*On shevelitsia, mertvyi*). The vital power of the wet blood, then, provides for the continual renewal of the poetic voice, which can never be completely silenced. By partaking of the "sacred spirits" of the sacrificed poetic word, Krivulin's own generation will also begin to heal the deep wounds inflicted by the Soviet state, which in essence has made poets of the underground into metaphorical "Old Believers." Thus, it is the vital energy of the sacrificed poetic voice—specifically, its life-giving blood—that finally allows the speaker to penetrate the "iron curtain" separating him from Russian poetic tradition. By imbibing the "wine of archaisms," the speaker partakes in a sacred ritual of communion with the poetic word. This communion with pre-revolutionary Russian culture, then, is what slowly heals the wounds of poets trapped in the "narcotic oblivion" of the Brezhnev era.

Krivulin's verb for resurrection (*voskreshenie*, as opposed to *voskresenie*) emphasizes the need for active participation in the transfiguration of the word.[51] Unlike Isaiah, whose guilt is taken away by an angel, the modern poet must work toward his own spiritual renewal by laboring over the poetic traces of the past. Krivulin's speaker lives off the fumes of former feasts: his generation represents poetry in the post-heroic age, when, in the words of Heidegger, to be a poet means "to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods" (94).

In the final lines of "I drink the wine," Krivulin uses an archaic Biblical word for "vinegar" (*otset*). The evangelical use of *otset* in the phrase "*napoiat' otstom*" means roughly "to bring suffering to."[52] In Krivulin's poem, the wine gives off "the vinegar-scent of an ossified love/and resurrection of wounds." Here it becomes important to recall the poem's connection with sacrifice. While offering himself on the cross, Christ was given vinegar to drink.[53] The poets of Russia's cultural past, particularly Mandelstam, offered themselves in service to Logos. Krivulin's generation now partakes of the traces of wine preserved from the past, and through such communion, which brings both joy and suffering, their own wounds are healed.

Appendix: The translation [*alternate variants are in brackets]:

I drink the wine of archaisms. Of the sun which once was burning,
a tongue speaks, tripping, and raves in a haze.
The red foam of sunset is still on my lips,
everywhere — fiery sunset reflections, tongues* of books being burned. [languages]
Every word perishes, but perishes joyously, wingéd,
Flying into the embraces of Logos-brother,
from whom the fire of exiled life first arose.

Every word perishes!
In wood groves of libraries
the drunkenness of bygone days
weighs on my eyelids.
Who said: [down to the] catacombs?
We shamble to bars and to drugstores!
And underground fates
are black like underground rivers,
greasy like oil. To immerse
you, human, into this liquid,
who passed away in a most humane age!

How you'd light up, covered in feathery fire!
I drink the wine of archaisms. I burn from shame o'er the page:
wandering foreign-page thought is regaling in some other world,
reviving at times estranged faces.
To senselessness — shameful to say — I contrive to get drunk
on the dead letter of intellect — 'til the loss in my consciousness
of seven-sided glittering prisms of an eyewitness!

In a nearsighted haze
in the pre-morning smokeclouds of loss —
wine dregs of structures
and grapes of half-asleep eyes.
The labor of hangover. Hangover of labor.
The visual angle is shaky and changing.
Through speech's distorting lens
dream-cities are flattened.
As for Gothic — there's nothing,
nothing to see it with,
seeing as somewhere we've lost the hostility
between the light and the dark.
The name of this narcotic oblivion
seems to be me.

The Spirit of underground culture, as an early apostle-like light,
glimmers in windows, swirls from black basements.
I drink the wine of archaisms. I hang out* at belated feasts, [get high]
but ahead still — I hope, I believe — no!
I'd like to believe in the ashes at least, or the gaps,
what remains after — the sole trace
of an extinguished word that in me blazed up!

The voice dies — an echo lives on.
Tongs tear out a tongue,
it is smoldering on the damp scaffold 'mid all the planks,
flattened, it sticks to the boots.
It wriggles, it's dead, become drunk
with the sensation of its own blood . . .
I drink the wine of archaisms, which intoxicates anew,
giving off faintly the vinegar-scent of an ossified love,
and resurrection of wounds.

NOTES

* All translations of Mandelstam and Krivulin are my own. I would like to thank David Bethea, Alexander Dolinin, Leonid Livak, Stephen Baehr, and especially my two readers for numerous helpful suggestions.

1 The phenomenon of *magnitizdat* had a particularly important influence on underground poetry due to its primary link with the human voice (*golos*). Viktor Krivulin discusses the significance of the spoken word for underground poets in "Zolotoi vek samizdata" ("The Golden Age of Samizdat") in the volume *Samizdat veka*, 342–354.

2 Pikach examines one of the first censored collections of the unpublished generation, the 1985 volume *Krug* (*The Circle*). (For the publication history of *Krug* see "*Krug* i vokrug.") He openly admits his skepticism towards this "younger generation" of poets, claiming he will "most likely never become an admirer of the talent of Elena Shvarts or Viktor Krivulin" (20). Gordeeva considers the "Leningrad school" in greater detail, paying particular attention to the poetry of Aleksandr Kushner and David Samoilov and the prose of Andrei Bitov, but she never addresses the issue of the underground as a cultural phenomenon. Ivanov gives a more detailed sketch of *samizdat* culture and discusses the history of several key journals of the Leningrad underground. Finally, the massive tome *Samizdat veka* presents a wide range of selections from poets, writers, and artists of the underground generation, as well as a fairly detailed history of *samizdat*. As the introduction states, *Samizdat veka* "aims to encompass practically all spheres of *samizdat* activity" (11). Despite its considerable breadth and variety, however, this volume represents only a general overview of the so-called "second culture."

3 See in particular "Zolotoi vek samizdata," as well as Krivulin 1995.

4 Biographical material on Krivulin is based on Kuzminsky and Kovalev 4B: 185–86. For information on Kuzminsky and this anthology, see Kulakov. The recently published *Reference Guide to Russian Literature* (see 467–468) contains a brief introduction to Krivulin's life and work, including a bibliography compiled by Michael Molnar (see pp. 467–68). For selections of Krivulin's poetry in English, see Johnson and Ashby, 235–42; *The Poetry of Perestroika*, ed. by Peter Mortimer and S. J. Litherland (Newcastle upon Tyne: Iron Press, 1990); and *Child of Europe*, ed. by Michael March (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 219–23.

5 *Reference Guide to Russian Literature*, 467.

6 Literally, *lepta* is a small coin, or mite, and is most often used in the expression "to contribute one's mite" (*vnesti svoiu leptu*). In "Poetry Is a Conversation of Language with Itself," Krivulin explains how *Lepta* received its name: one of the editors, Oleg Okhapkin, had "wished to bring whatever mite he had to the altar of Russian literature" (69).

7 For more on the history of *Lepta*, see Kuzminsky, 5B: 92–116 and 232–325. *Lepta*

included a wide range of talented poets; among those mentioned in Oleg Okhapkin's letter of March 4, 1975 to the Secretariat of the Union of Soviet Writers are Dmitrii Bobyshev, Sergei Stratanovskii, Elena Shvarts, Petr Cheigin and, of course, Viktor Krivulin (Kuzminsky, 5B: 295–298). The letter refers to the hopeless situation of an entire generation of writers trapped in a "second literary reality," a term that enjoyed wide usage by unpublished poets of Krivulin's generation.

8 In "Poetry Is a Conversation of Language with Itself," Krivulin writes:

> There is an important aspect that differentiates Leningrad poetry of the sixties from that of Moscow, and that is the aspect of spirituality. In principle, the Leningrad school is very spiritual, independent of whatever the issue at hand is, be it dadaism or symbolism. Some kind of special spiritual guardedness with respect to the word is constantly present. (65)

9 The probable influence of Tynianov is evident throughout this introduction. One is even tempted to link Krivulin's concept of drinking in the archaisms of the past with Tynianov's discussion of the function of archaisms in *Archaists and Innovators* (*Arkhaisty i novatory*) [see esp. 33–35].

10 See note 4 above. Krivulin is conspiculously absent from Yevgeny Yevtushenko's *Twentieth Century Russian Poetry: Silver and Steel* (1993).

11 "Literaturnye portrety v esseistike Iosifa Brodskogo," *Russian Literature* 37 (1995): 257–266, and *Petropol'* 6 (1996): 65–74; "Poeziia i pravda Sergeia Dovlatova," *Petropol'* 5 (1994): 164–166; "Bolezn' kak faktor poetiki Annenskogo," *Innokentii Annenskii i russkaia kul'tura XX veka* (St. Petersburg: AO "Ardis," 1996) 105–109; "Sergei Stratanovskii: k voprosu o peterburgskoi versii postmoderna," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 19 (1996): 261–267. Krivulin also wrote an excellent introduction to Mandel'stam's later poetry for *The Voronezh Notebooks*, (Newcastle, England: Bloodaxe Books, 1996).

12 Sedakova is of course referring to Viacheslav Ivanov's celebrated literary salon, where many of the most talented writers, musicians, artists and philosophers of Russia gathered from 1905–1912. Ivanov's apartment was located on the top floor in a tower-shaped building at present-day 38 Tavricheskaia Street in St. Petersburg—hence its nickname, "The Tower."

13 I should mention Lidiia Ginzburg's "The Poetics of Osip Mandelstam" (1966) as another likely influence on Krivulin's poetic development. In her ground-breaking article Ginzburg discusses several of the Mandelstam poems that serve as intertexts for "I drink the wine."

14 In fact, Krivulin's relationship to the embodied poetic word (*plot'*), as well as to divine Logos (*Logos-brat*), may be related to the philosophical writings of Florenskii. In both his essays on art and his better-known *Pillar and the Foundation of Truth* (*Stolp i utverzhdenie istiny*), Florenskii develops an aesthetics of Logos quite similar to Krivulin's. In addition, "I drink the wine" contains topoi of a phoenix, baptism, fire, light, and prisms—all images used by Florenskii and Vladimir Solov'ev in their essays on aesthetics. While the influence of Russian religious thinkers on Krivulin undoubtedly deserves more detailed study, this article, due to considerations of length, will limit itself primarily to Krivulin's relation to the *poetic* legacy of Russian modernism.

15 Lectures on contemporary Russian poetry, UW-Madison, February 1997.

16 Krivulin links this insight to his reading of Boratynskii. However, I would argue that Mandelstam's essay "About the Interlocutor" (*O sobesednike*) may be the actual source of Krivulin's insight, especially since Mandelstam refers directly to Boratynskii's poetry to illustrate his main point that poetry is based on dialogue. Mandelstam writes, "When I speak with someone, I don't know with whom I am speaking, and I do not wish to know, cannot know. There is no lyric without dialogue" (*Sobranie sochinenii*, 239).

17 Krivulin's image of foam on the speaker's lips recalls Mandelstam's poetry, in particular

"I'll give it to you absolutely straight" (*Ia skazhu tebe s poslednei/Priamotoi, Sobranie sochinenii*, I, 161–162), where the speaker has "salty foam on his lips" (*a mne solenoi penoi/Po gubam*). Like "I drink the wine," "I'll give it to you absolutely straight" employs a drinking motif to convey the loss of culture: just as the rich culture of Hellenism was once crushed by the totalitarian government of Rome, so the rich heritage of Russian modernism was being wiped out by the brutal forces unleashed by the revolution.

18 See, for example, Merezhkovskii's "Children of the Night" (*Deti nochi*, 1893); Bal'mont's "I came into this world to see the Sun" (*Ia v etot mir prishel, chtob videt' Solntse*, 1902) and "We will be like the sun! . . ." (*Budem kak solntse*, 1902); Blok's "I believe in the Sun of the Testament" (*Veriu v Solntse Zaveta*, 1902); and so forth.

19 Clear examples include: "In Petersburg we'll meet again,/As if we buried the sun there" (*V Peterburge my soidemsia snova,/Slovno solntse my pokhoronili v nem*); "Sisters—heaviness and tenderness" (*Sestry—tiazhest' i nezhnost'*), with its image of yesterday's sun carried out on black stretchers (*I vcherashnee solntse na chernykh nosilkakh nesut*).

20 One should note that in the essay "The Collapse of Humanism" (*Krushenie gumanizma*), Blok also employs the term "catacombs" (*katakomby*) specifically in relation to the need to preserve cultural treasures. Blok compares the situation of Russia during the Revolution with the "first Christians, who saved their spiritual inheritance" in catacombs (338).

21 For a discussion of Mandelstam's use of "eyewitness" (*ochevidets*), see Irina Mess-Beier's *Mandel'shtam i stalinskaia epokha: Ezopov iazyk v poezii Mandel'shtama 30-kh godov* (Helsinki: Slavica Helsingiensia, 1997), 110–115. Mess-Beier contextualizes "Stanzas" (*Stansy*, 1935) within both the political context of the 1930s and the larger backdrop of Russian literature and culture, demonstrating how Mandelstam's *ochevidets* has "seen too much, understood, and was punished for this" (113). She also links the image of *ochevidets* with chroniclers (*letopistsy*), noting Mandelstam's use of archaisms.

22 In this light, Briusov's rather harsh review of Mandelstam's second book (1923) may shed additional light on Krivulin's polemics with Briusov. Mandelstam is criticized for obsessive attention to tradition, excessive use of archaic images, and his frequent references to the cultural and historical past. Briusov criticizes Mandelstam's failure to address modernity (*sovremennost'*) and to speak of what is happening "in our age" (*v nashem veke*). The similarity of Krivulin's focus on the "wine of archaisms" (which, ironically, has become Russian modernism!) with Mandelstam's focus on ancient classical poetry is obvious—Krivulin wishes to re-establish severed links with the tradition of the past. For the text of Briusov's review, see Valerii Briusov, *Sredi stikhov, 1894–1924*. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990, pp. 639–643.

23 Drug stores (*apteki*) occupy a special place in Krivulin's poetic landscape. The use of *apteka* in such close proximity to "bars" (*pivnye*) suggests the common practice in the late 1960s and early 1970s of buying large quantities of over-the-counter amphetamines in order to get high (*lovit' kaif*). Bars, drugstores, and the consumption of wine also evoke the poetry of Blok (i.e., "*Noch', ulitsa, fonar', apteka*," "*Nenzakomka*," etc.).

In Krivulin's poem "Chemist-Shop City" ("*Grad aptechnyi*") *homunculi* are studied inside a "Leningrad beaker," an image recalling Peter the Great's famous museum of curiosities, *Kunstkamera*. The speaker observes the freakish beings around him as if they are mannequins under artificial light. These *homunculi* stick to the transparent walls of large display windows, helplessly regressing to a more primitive state of existence. Continuing in the tradition of Mandel'stam's "Lamark," Krivulin's poem captures the cultural and spiritual decay of the Brezhnev era, as well as the moral and ethical issues related to Soviet "social engineering." Krivulin's tendency to view history as if through a giant lens brings to mind Khlebnikov. "Real life" is thus reduced to a sort of microscopic "still life" before the eyes of the observer (see, for instance, Krivulin's "Still-life with a Head of Garlic" [*Natiurmort s golovkoi chesnoka*]).

24 Here Krivulin is obviously expressing irony towards the excessive optimism of official Soviet culture, which is largely responsible for creating "children of a half-culture" with "half childlike smiles." See note 23 above and the discussion of "Chemist-Shop City."

25 While analyzing the Hölderlin elegy "Bread and Wine," Heidegger reflects on the role of poets in a destitute time. For Heidegger, language, particularly poetry, is inextricably linked with dwelling and hence with building. If to be human means to dwell and poetry is, according to Heidegger, a "letting-dwell," then it follows that our existence is dependent upon and defined by the poetic edifices we create. During culturally destitute periods, it is the particular duty of poets to "gather in poetry the nature of poetry":

> Poets are the mortals who, singing earnestly of the wine-god, sense the trace of the fugitive gods, stay on the gods' tracks, and so trace for their kindred mortals the way towards the turning. Traces are often inconspicuous, and are always the legacy of a directive that is barely divined. To be a poet in a destitute time means: to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods. (94)

Heidegger's essays highlight one of the central concerns explored in Krivulin's poetry, the role of the poet in a culturally and spiritually destitute time.

26 "My labor, in whatever form it is expressed, is received as mischief, as lawlessness, as chance. But this is my will, and I am in agreement with this [situation]" (*Sobranie sochinenii*, 191).

27 Here Krivulin continues a tradition made famous by Venedikt Erofeev's *Moskva-Petushki.* The atmosphere of cultural and spiritual alienation in both works is highly representative of underground literature.

28 While it would be a gross oversimplification to read Mandelstam's use of the sun in this poem as referring only to Pushkin, there is clearly sufficient evidence in Mandelstam's own writing to justify connecting this image with "the sun of Russian poetry." In "Pushkin and Scriabin," for example, the sun is the main image used to evoke both the life and death of Pushkin. Furthermore, Mandelstam specifically links Pushkin's death AND BURIAL with the "image of the night sun."

29 See, for example, Mandelstam's "The Finder of a Horseshoe" (*Nashedshii podkovu*).

30 Krivulin may also be expressing irony towards the Soviet cliche that socialism is "the most humane political system in the world"—particularly since this slogan was widely "advertised" on billboards in the 1970s. My thanks to Stephen Baehr for this observation.

31 See Matthew 17:1–13, Mark 9:2–12, and Luke 9:27–36.

32 I am grateful to Ol'ga Sedakova for this "*samizdat*" version of the poem.

33 The image of feathery fire could also be linked with either Mandelstam, who often used bird imagery in his poetry and was described by his contemporaries as having "birdlike" features, or Khlebnikov, whose poetic experiments with "bird language" are fairly well known. Given the context in the poem, however, the primary allusion seems to be to the phoenix.

34 While the image of a phoenix is fairly common in Russian culture, Krivulin also makes direct references to Florenskii in poems such as "On the Way Home" (*Na puti k domu*).

35 Ronen notes that Zhukovskii's "Roses" (*Rozy*) is the principal subtext of "Sisters—heaviness and tenderness" (see p. 337 n.16). Krivulin has several poems ("*Demon*," for example) in which the lyrical speaker labors like a bee to suck out "black tar" (*chernaia smola*) buried deep in the "honeycombs" of Russian culture. "Black tar" is an image frequently employed by Mandel'stam to represent culture stored away for future generations—"*Nashedshii podkovu*" is a striking example, where the speaker breathes in the scent of "black tears of tar" appearing through the planking of a ship. Brodsky also incorporates Mandel'stam's image of tar inside planks in *Isaak i Avraam.*

36 For a discussion of the importance of drinking as a metaphor in Russian poetic tradition, see Gutkin. While analyzing Mandelstam's "Verses about Russian Poetry," Gutkin argues that Mandelstam "saw the wine theme as the 'brewer's yeast,' the very source for Russian poetry" (97).

37 In Russian, the word "grape" (*vinograd*) literally combines the images of "wine" (*vino*) and "city" (*grad*). Krivulin employs this combination in his 1972 poem "Grapes" (*Vinograd*), which contains the line "But in the city of wine drunkest of all are dreams" (*No v gorode vina vsego p'ianee sny*, *Stikhi: osnovnye zapisi*, 20). Here Krivulin makes his play with "grapes" (*vino-grad*, "wine-city") even more obvious by inverting the order of the roots (i.e. "*vino-grad*" becomes "*v gorode vina*," or "in the city of wine"). For the etymology of *vinograd* and its connection with the root for city (*grad*), see P. Ia. Chernykh, *Istoriko-etymologicheskii slovar' sovremennogo russkogo iazyka*, 152.

Both Taranovskii and Ronen (149–154) have discussed Mandelstam's use of grape imagery, which consistently suggests poetry and the ripening of the word. Krivulin's use of *vinograd* has clear religious implications, both due to the speaker's communion with tradition as well as "the spirit of underground culture as an early apostle-like light." In Old Church Slavic, *vinograd* is often used as a metaphor for both Christianity and the Christian church. See *Slovar' drevnerusskogo iazyka*, I, 431–432. In his discussion of grape imagery Baehr also notes the New Testament motif of Christ as the "true vine" (John 15:1; see Baehr, p. 228, n. 59).

38 In Mandelstam's "I will not see the famous *Phaedre*" the speaker regrets that he "has arrived late for the festivities of Racine" (*Ia opozdal na prazdnestvo Rasina!*). In Krivulin's poem, the speaker "hangs around belated feasts" (*torchu na pirakh zapozdalykh*). "I will not see the famous *Phaedre*" is an obvious subtext in Krivulin's lyric "I will not hear the reading of Mandelstam" (*Ia ne uslyshu chten'e Mandel'shtama*).

39 For a detailed intertextual discussion, see Ronen (331–363), who concludes: "What is asserted in ["No, I was never anybody's contemporary"] is the act of the communion itself, the noncontemporary's inevitable partaking of the historical death of the age and its resurrection in spirit" (362). Ronen's reading suggests Krivulin was fully aware of the deeper implications of Mandelstam's poetry.

40 For a more detailed discussion of Mandelstam's anthropomorphic image of the age (*vek*), see Ronen (240–243 and 259–260).

41 This image is clearly meant to echo Mandelstam's image of eyes as "two sleepy apples" (*dva sonnykh iabloka*) in "1 January 1924." Mandelstam uses similar imagery of tired eyes in the essay "Pushkin and Scriabin":

> The winemakers of old Dionysus: I imagine closed eyes and a light, ceremonial small head, slightly thrown backwards . . . to die means to remember, to remember means to die . . . To remember no matter what the cost! To stave off oblivion—even if the price is death, this is the motto of Scriabin . . . ." (*Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 2, 317–318)

42 Clear examples of Mandelstam's "visual focus" include: "*Moi shchegol', ia golovu zakinu—/Pogliadim na mir vdvoem*" (*Stikhotvoreniia*, 222); "*Ottogo vse neudachi,/Chto ia vizhu pred soboi*" (229); "*Tvoi zrachok v nebesnoi korke,/Obrashchennoi vdal' i nits*" (229); and "*V litso morozu ia gliazhu odin*" (233).

43 Krivulin's image recalls his own 1971 poem "Angel of the Rainbow" (*Angel radugi*), in which "the soul shatters into seven distinct colors/And death comes not with a scythe, but resembles a prism" (71). Florenskii and Solov'ev both employ topoi of a prism and refracted light in their philosophical and aesthetic essays.

44 By coining the word *ino-strannitsa*, Krivulin emphasizes the paronomastic link between the words: 1) "page" (*stranitsa*); 2) "foreigner," or more literally, "one of another country" (*inostranets*); and 3) "wanderer/religious pilgrim" (*strannik*, or its feminine equiva-

lent, *strannitsa*). Thus, Krivulin's neologism simultaneously suggests the speaker's role as a cultural "religious pilgrim," as well as his alienation from the text on the page.

45 See especially Mandelstam's discussion of Rozanov, who is another important influence on Krivulin (*Sobranie sochinenii*, 250).

46 Krivulin undoubtedly meant to evoke Pasternak's "Feasts" (*Piry*) as well: Pasternak's well-known poem is one of the few in Russian literature opening with the word *P'iu* ("I drink")—another is Pushkin's "I drink to the health of Mary" (*P'iu za zdravie Meri*)—an important intertext for Mandelstam's "I'll give it to you absolutely straight." "Feasts" contains the specific motif of drinking in poetry (*Rydaiushchei strofy syruiu gorech' p'iu*)—and links such an activity with burning (*goriashchuiu struiu*), sorrow, and bitterness (*syruiu gorech' p'iu*). Finally, in Pasternak's poem, anapests "rummage"—or "soul-search," depending on the translation—like a mouse in a cookie jar as the "tops of trees burn":

> И тихою зарей—верхи дерев горят—
> В сухарнице, как мышь, копается анапест . . . (*Stikhotvoreniia . . .* , 26)

Pasternak's poem evokes a poetic feast in honor of the dying word, one for which the speaker of Krivulin's "I drink the wine" has arrived too late. For Krivulin, Pasternak is clearly aligned with Mandelstam as a defender of tradition against the destructive forces of the revolution.

47 It should also be mentioned that the truncated stanzas contain a much more elaborate rhyme scheme than their classical counterparts: in the first truncated stanza, for example, the rhyme scheme is AbABCBDBDbB. The fifth line of this stanza contains no rhyme pair; instead, it acts as a catalyst for the "classical" stanza that follows, rhyming with the first, third and sixth lines. The truncated fourth and sixth stanzas are similarly complex.

48 Mandelstam's "Pushkin and Scriabin" may further clarify Krivulin's imagery. Scriabin embodies the next phase of Hellenism in Russian culture after Pushkin; he is the Dionysian "raving Hellene," the "sun of guilt" representing joyous, willing self-sacrifice. Mandelstam traces the roots of such poetic liberation to Christianity, particularly Christ's willing ascent to the cross. Mandelstam's lyric "I will not see the famous *Phaedre*" (*Ia ne uvizhu znamenitoi Fedry*), refers to such a Dionysian rending of the Muse.

49 I am grateful to reader B for this important observation. Krivulin's self-irony in "I drink the wine"—i.e. the speaker becomes "drunk on the dead letter of reason," etc.—also mirrors the narrative tone in Avvakum's *Life*. Avvakum ends his autobiography with the assertion that his addressee has probably "heard enough of his babble" (*Nu, starets, moevo viakan'ia mnogo ved' ty slyshal*). The self-deprecating tone here is very close to that at the beginning of "I drink the wine"—"Of the sun which once was burning/the tongue speaks, tripping, and raves in a haze" (*O solntse, gorevshem kogda-to, /govorit, zapletaias', i bredit iazyk*).

50 The boots which trample the tongue on the scaffold evoke association with the violence unleased by the revolution, recalling works such as Isaak Babel's tale "The Life of Matthew Rodionovich Pavlichenko" (*Zhizneopisanie Pavlichenki, Matveia Rodionovicha*), when the hero tramples his master for nearly an hour. The boots also recall the revolutionary refrain of boots being more valuable than Shakespeare—an idea to which Blok refers in "The Collapse of Humanism."

51 Krivulin may have borrowed this important nuance from Nikolai Fedorov's *Philosophy of the Common Cause*. Fedorov deliberately spelled resurrection *voskreshenie*, as Krivulin has, to emphasize the participatory nature of transfiguring the world and the flesh, as opposed to an idea of salvation from grace, or *blagodat'*.

52 Dal' gives the definition of *otset* as "vinegar" (*uksus*), tracing the word to the evangelical expression *napoiat' otstom i zhelch'iu*. (Vol. 2, 1030).

53 See Matthew 27:45–50, Mark 15:33–37, and John 19:28–30. Significantly, all four gospels emphasize the darkness of the sky (in Luke 23:45 "the sun stopped shining").

WORKS CITED

Baehr, Stephen. *The Paradise Myth in Eighteenth-Century Russia.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

Blok, Aleksandr. *Izbrannoe.* Moscow: AST Olimp, 1996.

———. *O literature.* 2nd ed. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989.

Briusov, Valerii. *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy.* Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1961.

Brodsky, Iosif. *Sochineniia Iosifa Brodskogo.* Vol. II. St. Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 1994.

———. *Less Than One.* New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986.

Chernykh, P. Ia. *Istoriko-etymologicheskii slovar' sovremennogo russkogo iazyka.* Moscow: Russkii iazyk, 1994

Dal', Vladimir. *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka.* Moscow: Russkii iazyk, 1989.

Florenskii, Pavel. *Stolp i utverzhdenie istiny: Opyt pravoslavnoi teoditsei v dvenadtsati pis'makh.* Ed. N. A. Struve. Paris: YMCA-Press, 1989.

Ginzburg, Lidiia. "Poetika Osipa Mandel'shtama." *O starom i novom.* Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1982. 245–300.

Gofman, M. *Poety simvolizma.* Petersburg, 1908; reprint, Munich: Fink Verlag, 1970.

Gordeeva, Galina. "Svobodnaia taina, ili davai uletim." *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 7 (1990): 230–239.

Gutkin, Irina. "The Ethics and Poetics of Drinking and Joy: The Anacreontic Triad from Lomonosov to Pushkin." *Elementa* 3 (1996): 97–114.

Heidegger, Martin. *Poetry, Language, Thought.* Trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

Ivanov, Boris. "V bytnost' Peterburga Leningradom." *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 14 (1995): 188–199.

Johnson, Kent and Stephen M. Ashby, eds. *Third Wave: the New Russian Poetry.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992.

Krivulin, Viktor. *Stikhi: osnovnye zapisi.* Paris: 1988.

———. *Stikhi.* Paris: Biblioteka sovremennogo poeta,1981.

———. "Poetry Is a Conversation of Language with Itself." *Russian Studies in Literature.* 34 (Summer 1998): 55–71. Trans. of "Poeziia—eto razgovor samogo iazyka: Na voprosy korrespondenta 'NLO' kritika Vladislava Kulakova otvechaet poet Viktor Krivulin." *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 14 (1995): 223–33.

"*Krug* i vokrug, ili k istorii odnoi krugovoi poruki." *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 14 (1995): 234–251.

Kulakov, Vladislav. "'A professorov, polagaiu, nado veshat'.'" *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 14 (1995): 200–208.

Kuzminsky, Konstantin K. and Gregory L. Kovalev. *The Blue Lagoon Anthology of Modern Russian Poetry.* Vols. 4B and 5B. Newtonville, Mass.: Oriental Research Partners, 1983.

Mandelstam, Osip. *Stikhotvoreniia, perevody, ocherki, stat'i.* Tbilisi: Merani, 1990.

———. *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh.* Vol. 2. Moscow: Terra, 1991.

Mess-Beier, Irina. *Mandel'shtam i stalinskaia epokha: Ezopov iazyk v poezii Mandel'shtama 30-kh godov.* Helsinki: Slavica Helsingiensia, 1997.

Pamiatniki literatury Drevnei Rusi: XVII vek. Vol. 2. Ed. L. Dmitriev and D. Likhachev. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989.

Pasternak, Boris. *Stikhotvoreniia. Poemy. Proza.* Moscow: Olimp, 1996.

Pikach, Anatolii. "Novye imena i starye problemy." *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 2 (1988): 19–27.

Reference Guide to Russian Literature. Ed. by Neil Cornwell. London-Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998.

Ronen, Omry. *An Approach to Mandel'stam.* Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1983.

Samizdat veka. Ed. by Anatolii Strelianyi, Genrikh Sapgir, Vladimir Bakhtin and Nikita Ordynskii. Minsk-Moscow: Polifakt, 1997

Sedakova, Olga. "Ocherki drugoi poezii: Ocherk pervyi. Viktor Krivulin." *Druzhba narodov* 10 (1991): 258–266.

Serebrianyi vek. Moscow: AST Olimp, 1996.

Slovar' drevnerusskogo iazyka (XI–XIV vv.). Ed. R. I Avanesov. Vol. 1. Moscow: Russkii iazyk, 1988.

Taranovskii, K. F. "The Problem of Context and Subtext in the Poetry of Osip Mandel'stam." *Slavic Forum.* The Hague, 1974; *Essays on Mandel'stam.* Cambridge, Mass, 1976.

Tiutchev, F. I. "*O veshchaia dusha moia! . . .*" Moscow: Shkola press, 1995.

Tynianov, Iurii. *Arkhaisty i novatory.* Leningrad, 1929; reprint, Munich: Fink Verlag, 1967.